10: d'Orleans--308 T-3 (1891-92) 1894 Laos
116, 183, 512, 641, 831

"It may be asked how do the Laotians spend their time if they are lazy and have scarcely any occupation? The answer is easy--the greater part of their days and nights being employed in paying court to the young ladies and in services at the pagoda.

Formerly there was a law dispensing the young men from military service and taxation upon the ground that their first duty was towards the young women and although this law is repealed de jure, it still serves as a rule of conduct and reveals the spirit of this people."

25: Brodrick--109 S-3 (1939) 1948 Laotians
116, 346, 527, 641

"The Moon City [HD: i.e. Vientane] was once a town of sanctuaries and held, they say, over eighty pagodas, but there are now only twenty-four, most of which are in ruins. The place was thoroughly sacked by the Siamese in 1827. The Sisaket pagoda has been more or less restored, and here take place twice a year the ceremonies of the Great and of the Little Oath, [HD: of allegiance] this time to the prevailing government in France and not to the Lord of the Elephants and the Umbrella. [HD: i.e. the king of Luang Prabang]"

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2. The Khas (2) or descendants of the prehistoric aborigines.

(2) In Laos the word Kha means slave, individual of inferior and scornful condition, or else one who lives as a savage. The name, which was applied by the last invaders of Laos to the races which had preceded them there, has the same meaning as Moï in Annamite, Stieng or Peunong in Cambodian and Orang Oulou in Malay.

They mixed with newcomers to form a large variety of secondary tribes which, despite their common origin, differ from one another in type, language, dialect or idiom, mores, customs, dress, etc.

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The Khas have no form of writing, except for the Khouènes and the Khmous who have been partly converted to Buddhism while their [127] fellows have clung to a crude fetishism in which belief in spirits (Phis) prevails.

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A few of these tribes have not yet submitted to our domination and do not pay any taxes.

The principal Kha tribes in Laos are the following:

a) In northern Laos. (The names below should be followed by the word Khas.)

1. PURE KHAS

Khouènes-Khao.	Koussoungs.	Bos.	Kouangs.
Khouènes-Dam.	Bits.	Sapouans.	Saks.
Lemets.	Phèng-Mis.	Kasèngs.	Mouçeus.
Leups.	Sos.	Tiols.	Khmous.
Lawas.	Siengs-Di.	Alous.	
Khos.	Giois.	Ouxas.	
Khouis.	Hock-Roï.	Panas.	

2. KHAS MIXED WITH LAOTIANS, THAIS, LUS AND YOUNS OR IN THE COURSE OF CHANGE

Oks.	Sos.	Phongs.	Phou-Thuongs.
Youngs.	Souês.	Laos-Nîos.	Phou-Oks.
Phou-Phays.	Sèks.	Phou-Thengs.	

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pass from one generation to another and suffer partial suppressions and numberless interpolations.

The bonzes of our own day do not know the sacred language and are reduced to imitating the "hateful" monks of whom Rabelais speaks, "who neither till the soil nor work, but only mumble a great stock of legends and psalms which they do not understand at all."

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The bonzes are the ones who consecrate water and prepare with their prayers for the pronunciation of the oath of allegiance which native officials take twice a year to their direct sovereign and, if necessary, to their suzerain both for themselves and for the whole population. The oath consists in reciting the formula and in drinking lustral water in which the candles used for the ceremony have been extinguished and in which the arms of the sovereign have been dipped.

The following is the formula of the oath which is pronounced in Laos twice a year, in the capital of each province, in the presence of the government commissioner. This formula has been in use in the land for centuries and was left just as it was, except for substituting the title of President of the Republic for that of the king of Siam, Vien-Tiane or Luang-Prabang.

Formula of the oath: "I (there follow the names, titles and qualities of each of the mandarins present, each of whom repeats the formula, which is read aloud by one of them, generally the eldest), take an oath of allegiance and offer my life to the President of the French Republic. I give my word before God and before the angels present in heaven. May God and his angels deign to listen to my vows, because the President of the French Republic governs our land with wisdom and skill, follows the ancient customs and protects the bonzes, the authorities and the inhabitants.

"I place myself under his sacred feet, as well as the soldiers and inhabitants who live in my muong, and we all swear him allegiance.

[168] "I ask to serve the administration in the shadow of his sacred feet and to acknowledge his goodness by promising to be faithful and never to revolt in thought, word or body.

"If I show myself ungrateful to, or if I revolt against the President of the French Republic in thought, word or body; if I see or learn that peril threatens the President of the French Republic and remain silent instead of warning him immediately of the peril which I see or know; if I show myself ungrateful towards the President of the

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French Republic, whose happiness and wisdom only grow from day to day, may God and his angels who are present in the air and in heaven punish me, may they deprive me of all necessary things, may they kill me by the sky's lightning, may they strike me with all sorts of terrible maladies, may they cause me to die by the sword or the gun, may wild animals devour me, may I be entirely ruined, and may misfortune burden me everywhere I go or reside. May God and his angels cover my body with sores, and may diseases strike me, and may I die abandoned by all so as to serve as an example to the world; after my death may I be condemned for centuries to the flames of hell, and may nothing enable me to escape these exemplary punishments.

"If after (a thousand years) I am reborn to a new life in any part of the world whatsoever, may I not have an instant of happiness, may I lack everything, and may I never see God and his angels, who will never be able to cleanse me of the fault which I have committed by showing myself ungrateful and faithless towards the President of the French Republic.

"If, on the contrary, I am grateful and faithful to the President of the French Republic, if I never revolt in thought, word or body, if I never ally myself with foreigners to disturb his security and that of his people, may God and his angels who are present in the air and in heaven make me live long in this world, may I avoid all the dangers which threaten me, and may I be exempt from all human slavery; I drink the water of the oath; may peace and prosperity reign in my home.

"After my death, as a reward for my faithfulness, may my happiness continue in heaven in a place where joys and pleasures abound, and may I find myself with God in the midst of his angels. If later on (in a thousand years) I am reborn to a new life, may I be showered with riches, dignities, joys and pleasures, may I obtain all that I desire, may I be exempt from all human misery, and finally may I again find myself in the presence of God and his angels, as a reward for my fidelity and my gratitude, with the President of the French Republic.

"I drink the water of the oath" (1).

(1) After Captain Gosselin, op. cit. [Le Laos et le Protectorat français, 1900.]

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[169] The formula used in southern Laos is more concise and slightly different.

695 The natives of Laos, whatever their race, have a great respect for any oath and stand in much dread of the consequences of perjury.

Oaths are widely used in courts of law in cases of disputes between individuals. When a judge has reached the end of his arguments and is confronted with a stubborn plaintiff he sends him to the pagoda before the sacred statues to deny the accusation or affirm his statements.

In this case, the above formula is modified in accordance with the needs of the case, as regards the object of the oath and the type of authority invoked as sanction. But the basis is always the same.

As a means of legal procedure, an oath is regarded as an argument of such force and of such grave consequences that it is used only as a last resort. In Laos it is the ultima ratio judicium.

805 The Laotian calendar (1). The Laotian year is calculated on the

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(1) Since the bonzes establish the calendar we have thought it well to place this information in the chapter devoted to religion in Laos.

phases of the moon and includes twelve months which are divided into twenty-four half-moons. The months have thirty and twenty-nine days alternately, giving 354 days in the year or eleven days less than in the solar year.

In reality the Laotian calendar is luni-solar, for in order to bring the ordinary year into approximate harmony with the solar year an extra month is inserted every three years after the eighth month, and repeats the latter. It is called the "second eighth month" (Dueune pèt song). In chronological dating, the Laotian year begins about the middle of the fifth month (April).

Like the Siamese, the Laotians have adopted a system for co-ordinating and numbering their years which is based on a great cycle of sixty years and two other intermediate cycles of ten and twelve years each. The first of these intermediate cycles is decimal, and the second is zodiacal (duodecimal).

[170] Each year is designated first by the name of the great cycle, then by those of each of the intermediate cycles and by a chronological number.

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perfumed water in the hope of being cured of the ills from which they suffer. In the course of the day water is sprinkled now on the bonzes, who go forth in palanquins to pay each other visits, and now on the King, the great men and the native officials, who pass back and forth through the city for two days running, some on elephant back and the others in sedan chairs.

"Although the water used in sprinkling the bonzes and the King is generally clean and perfumed, the same cannot always be said of the water used to sprinkle the kingdom's great men and officials. Every day until four in the afternoon, the young girls try to douse the young men who pass by and to smear their faces black. The young men do not sprinkle the girls, but may try to smear them with black too.

"After four in the afternoon the people get flowers and use them to decorate the pagodas. In the evening, inside the pagodas which are empty of their Buddhas, young men and women meet around the altar and Ngan (celebrations) take place each day until such time as the statue of Buddha resumes its place in the sanctuary.

"On the morning of the fourth day all the officials of the Laotian administration who have been able to come to Luang-Prabang visit the King in ceremonial dress to offer him their best wishes for the new year. After an invocation the grand master of ceremonies presents the wishes of all those present, with candles lit and flowers which each person has brought all around. Again in the name of all those present, the grand master respectfully places the traditional cotton threads around the royal wrists. Then the members of the audience come up one after the other to kneel before the king, offer him their little bouquets flanked by wax candles and touch the outstretched hand of the monarch with their inclined foreheads. This is a most picturesque manner of hand-kissing and paying homage (1).

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(1) The administration of the "little oath" or oath of the fifth month takes place during this celebration.

"Holiday of the eighth month (July). This is the entry of the bonzes into retreat (this holiday corresponds to our meat days preceding Lent).

"Each year, from the eighth to the eleventh month, the bonzes are not allowed to sleep outside the pagoda to which they are

daughter, Princess Nang Yot Keo. At an indeterminate date which must come between 1340 and 1350, he was given the command of an army destined to reconquer the kingdom of his fathers. According to the Laotian chronicle, the victorious advance of this army enabled Fa Ngoum to declare himself king of Lan Xan. He immediately demanded the submission of all the Thai princes of Mekong. The center of resistance to Fa Ngoum was Phai Nam (spiny bamboos) because of the impenetrable vegetable belt which protected it like veritable ramparts. Fa Ngoum seized it by means of the classical trick of ornamenting missiles with gold and silver, then pretending to retreat and then pouncing on the enemy at the moment when they had scattered to gather the precious metal. In memory of this episode, the town was baptized Vieng Kham which means "circled with gold" and which later became Vientiane, "circled with sandalwood." Fa Ngoum organized his kingdom with force and reigned as a despot. Complaints were made and the king of Cambodia advised him to be moderate. Fa Ngoum then requested that a mission be sent him from Cambodia consisting of religious and lettered men, and of artisans. This mission introduced the orthodox books of Buddhism and a statue of the Buddha (Prabang) which had been presented in the eleventh century to the Khmer sovereign by the king of Ceylon. Prabang thus became the safeguard of the kingdom.

Up until recent years this tradition led one to believe that the introduction of Buddhism into Laos dated from Fa Ngoum. The discovery of a certain number of Buddhist sculptures of Khmer manufacture of the twelfth century A. D., has destroyed this theory (see below: Introduction of Buddhism to Laos).

After a series of wars, Fa Ngoum died in 1373 at the age of fifty-eight. His successor Sam Sen Thai reigned from 1373 to 1416. He kept [16] peace in his kingdom and passed on to his successor a prosperous kingdom, well established and living in peace, and at the same time dreaded by its neighbors.

The fifteenth century saw a succession of sovereigns about whom history has nothing in particular to tell. Let us mention, however, a war with the emperor of Annam. The first part of the sixteenth century passes under the reign of King Phothisarath (1506-1547), a pious Buddhist. One of his most famous actions is the edict against the cult of Phis. Setthathirath came into power in 1548 after a war with the Burmese. His death was followed by a troubled period. The beginning of the seventeenth century is particularly obscure, but in 1637 a great king called Souligna Vongsa (1637-1694) ascended

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Then the royal retinue proceeds to the That Luang where the king must spend the night in a sala. He is accompanied by his ministers and in principle may not leave until they come and fetch him.

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On the morning of the fifteenth day, the king, carried by his guards, goes to make his offerings to the bonzes, and the whole day is devoted to public rejoicing, of which one form deserves to be mentioned. It is the game of the Thi khi.

Its origin, so far as we know at present, remains obscure. The Pra Lak Pra Lam tells us that Indra and Rama played Thi Khi together, and that since that day it has been played at Vientiane.

Let us observe that the game was unknown at Luang Prabang. It was imported from the south. Tradition required that it be played on horseback, when it was played like polo.

At the present time it is played on foot with a stick with the end bent over like a crosier and a ball the size [47] of a child's head and is similar to hockey. There are two opposing sides, the office-holders and the people. The latter should in principle win two victories out of three games. The game has no rules, there is no umpire and no limit to the ground played on. Sometimes the ball goes off into the shrubbery, and all the players go and look for it. Only a hypothetical line indicates the limit of the enemy side. [641]

The feasts of Vat Inpeng and of Vat Ong Tu merely repeat those of Vat Simuong and That Luang.

[48] THE SECULAR CEREMONIES

[527 725]

The Sou Khouan can be considered as the transition between the purely religious ceremonies and the secular feasts.

Actually Sou Khouan means "call and reception of the soul." The Laotian has a profound belief in the transmigration of the soul. According to him, the human body is inhabited by thirty-two khouan (spirits) each of whom presides over the function of a member, an organ or an intellectual faculty.

When a human being dies, all of the thirty-two souls leave his body. According to the merits which have been acquired, they go either to the heaven of the gods, or to the province of the dead. Certain beings who have died in an abnormal manner, by suicide, drowning, etc., become wandering souls. They are to be feared, because they return to earth in order to torment the living, and one must make numerous sacrifices to them.